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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002796

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S VISIT TO MUKALLA SPARKS REQUESTS FOR GREATER COOPERATION

REF: SANAA 2531

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas Krajewski for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: On September 12-13, Ambassador visited the Hadramaut governorate capital and port city of Mukalla. In meetings with the Deputy Commander of the Eastern Military Region, university faculty, NGO activists and political and business leaders, Ambassador was repeatedly urged to increase USG assistance to the region's institutions. End Summary.

Deputy Governor Ba Yameen: Hadramaut Open For Business

2. (U) Welcoming the Ambassador to Mukalla, newly appointed Deputy Hadramaut Governor Sa'eed Ba Yameen, said that the recent flurry of investment in his developing governorate came not only from the often cited influx of capital from expatriated Hadrimis, but from all sectors of society, particularly private business. He encouraged Ambassador to push for US investment in the region noting that Mukalla was a "very new city open to all kinds of investment."

Deputy Area Commander Tahary: We Support The Coast Guard

3. (C) In his meeting with Deputy Commander of the Eastern Military Region, BG Naser Al-Thahry and his regional military staff, Ambassador noted that in addition to assisting the Yemeni Coast Guard (YCG) establish a new base in Hadramaut, the USG wished to strengthen ties with the Yemeni Navy and other MOD forces in the region. In response, BG Tahary told Ambassador that the ROYG, MOD and his office were fully in favor of expanding the YCG to the Hadramaut. (Reftel). "We need to fight terror, drugs and smuggling," he noted, "and we want a strong Coast Guard to accomplish this." The Deputy Commander also said that an increase in cooperation between Saudi Arabia and other Horn of Africa (HOA) countries would benefit Yemen and the United States. DATT, who was accompanying Ambassador, added that the US military looked forward to expanding ties with the Eastern Region.

University of Science and Technology: Partnerships Key

4. (U) After touring the Hadramaut Science and Technology University's (HSTU) new campus, the Ambassador spoke with over 50 faculty members about the University's challenges and needs. University President, Dr. Ahmad Ba Mashmou, said that his institution was more interested in partnerships with US universities and businesses than USG funding. He speculated that this could garner private US investment in the university (considered by many to be Yemen's premier Science faculty) and help the approximately 8,000 HSTU graduates find work. "We will pay the tuition, but please help us open the channels with your institutions," pleaded Ba Mashmou.

5. (U) Abdullah Mohammed Ba Haroun, President of the Sufi-oriented Al-Ahqaf University, added that partnerships with businesses could steer graduates to the private sector instead of the more common choice, the bloated government work force. Both men revealed that in order to facilitate partnerships, they were developing an accreditation process to allow foreign universities to properly review their institutions and students.

Yemeni Women's Union: We Need Support

6. (SBU) At the Yemeni Women's Union (YWU) Ambassador asked the more than 30 members whether or not they supported a woman's quota in the next local council and parliamentary elections. Chairwoman Salma al-Kathiri explained that her group endorsed a 30% women's quota in Local Council seats. Sa'eeda Shima', head of the Hadramaut YSP political party women's committee, and member Salma al Ghazi, head of legal programming, both explained that a quota was necessary to counter the lack of political will to empower women.

7. (SBU) The conversation quickly shifted to repeated calls

for USG support. Ghazi explained that YWU is only able to get financial support from the Governor's Office and proceeds from selling handicrafts. The group noted that they needed help with a new facility as well as funding to continue programs in literacy, women's health awareness, women prisoner's rights, and legal aid. Another member added that many in the group would be interested in attending US sponsored training. Ambassador promised to work with the YWU to identify possible US funding sources and expand US-YWU cooperation.

Livestock Quarantine: Increasing Capacity

18. (SBU) At the Mukalla Livestock Quarantine, run by the Ministry of Agriculture, Director Mohammed Faraj Abdoun informed Ambassador that the center could not keep up with the increased trade in sheep, goats and camels. The animals are imported from Somalia and held at the center before being allowed into the Yemeni and Arab Gulf markets. He asked Ambassador and USAID AgOff for US funding for an expansion of the center and an on-site animal testing unit. Testing samples, he noted, are currently sent to a central lab in Sanaa, which means animals must be held for weeks before being cleared. Ambassador indicated that he would work with USAID to see if there was a possibility to address the situation, but noted that USAID's mandate does not currently fund such projects in Hadramaut.

Chamber of Commerce: Access to US Markets

19. (U) At the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, members called for ways to access the US market. Members belonging to the fisheries industry noted that although their companies had the physical capacity to supply the United States with their product and could meet US food product standards as easily as they achieved EU standards, they needed help understanding US import requirements. Dietmar Alker, Advisor to the Chamber, added that many Hadrimi businessmen were afraid to travel to the US because of stricter security procedures. Ambassador answered that DHS has developed services to streamline travel to the US and that post would do everything it could to assist those wanting to travel to the US for business.

110. (C) Comment: Concerning expansion of the YCG, Ambassador's visit provided effective follow up to the DCM's trip just two weeks earlier. (reftel). Al-Thahry's positive response is encouraging but, given the known opposition of his powerful boss, BG Mohammed Ali Muhsen, should be taken with caution at this point. The other meetings offered several prospects to help the civil, business and academic communities and increase US visibility, in a vital, yet often neglected, part of the country. End Comment.

Krajeski